

IN THE CLAIMS:

All claim amendments and cancelations are made without prejudice or disclaimer. A complete listing of the claims and their status as of this Amendment is as follows:

1.(Currently amended) A method of activating and metallising an aromatic polymer film including the steps of, the method comprising:

pre-treating a first surface of an aromatic polymer film with a basic solution; following the pre-treatment step, applying to said first surface of the film an aqueous seeding solution comprising polymer-stabilized catalyst particles; and then immersing the film in an electroless plating bath comprising ions of a desired metal so as to deposit a layer of said metal onto the first surface of said film.

2,(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the basic solution is a solution of potassium hydroxide.

3.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein after the basic solution treatment step, an acidic solution is applied to said first surface.

4.(Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the acidic solution is a solution of a protic acid such as hydrochloric acid (HCl) or acetic acid.

5.(Canceled)

6.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the catalyst particles are stabilised by a water-soluble polymer.

7.(Currently amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the water-soluble polymer is polyvinyl pyrrolidone (PVP) or polyvinyl alcohol (PVA).

8.(Currently amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the ~~water-soluble polymer is PVP~~ aqueous seeding solution comprises hypophosphorous acid.

9.(Previously presented) The method of claim 5, wherein the palladium particles have diameters of from 1 to 50 nanometers.

10.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the desired metal is selected from the group consisting of nickel, copper and gold.

Claim 11 (Cancelled)

12.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the basic solution is applied by immersing the film in a bath of the basic solution.

13.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the basic solution is applied by spraying a layer of the solution onto the first surface of said film.

14.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the film is maintained in contact with the basic solution for 1 to 15 minutes after which the basic solution is washed off.

15.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the aqueous seeding solution is applied by immersing the film in a bath of the seeding solution.

16.(Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said immersion is for a period of from 5 to 60 seconds.

17.(Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein, after application of the aqueous seeding solution, the film is washed with de-ionised water to remove excess catalyst particles.

18.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein after the depositing of the layer of the desired metal, the film is washed with de-ionised water and dried.

19.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein after the depositing of the layer of the desired metal, the film is heated to improve adhesion between the film and the metal layer.

20.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein prior to the step of applying the basic solution, vias are formed, either substantially or entirely, through the film.

21.(Previously presented) The method of claim 20, wherein the vias are formed using laser drilling techniques.

22.(Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein prior to the step of applying the basic solution, photoresist material is applied to the film and said photoresist material is developed so as to facilitate patterning of desired circuitry onto said film.

23.(Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein, prior to the step of applying the basic solution, the film is cleaned and dried.

24.(Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the cleaning is effected by ultrasonication in acetone and de-ionised water.

25.(Previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein further cleaning is effected by ozone treatment at elevated temperature.

26.(Previously presented) The method of claim 25, wherein the ozone treatment is conducted at about 80°C for between 3 and 10 minutes.

27.(Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the aromatic polymer film is formed of a polyimide.

Claim 28 (Cancelled)

29.(Currently amended) A metal coated aromatic polymer film made according to the method of: pre-treating a first surface of an aromatic polymer film with a basic solution; following the pre-treatment step, applying to said first surface of the film an aqueous seeding solution comprising polymer-stabilized catalyst particles; and then immersing the film in an electroless plating bath comprising ions of a desired metal so as to deposit a layer of said metal onto the first surface of said film.

30. (New) The method of claim 4, wherein the protic acid is hydrochloric acid (HCl) or acetic acid.

31. (New) The method of claim 6, wherein the water-soluble polymer is polyvinyl alcohol (PVA)